1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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ough each group of full brothers, until, when the last full 595
ther is dead, and the son of the eldest is an adult, the family 428
ck comes to him. Thus few men under forty (other than chiefs)
e more than one wife. Of 3,000 tax-payers (presumed to be
years and over) in Selya, 34 per cent were bachelors, 37 per
t monogamists, and 29 per cent polygynists. Plural marriages 595
ed wealth, for the polygynist is likely to command the labour 556
many sons as well as several wives, and in due course he ex-
cts to receive the marriage cattle of many daughters.

Social status turns primarily on age, sex, and the control and 554
tribution of wealth. As we have seen, the position of a chief is 428
editary, but kinship with a chief does not carry office, nor are
kinsmen of chiefs conspicuously wealthy. Every man in turn
es to control the property attaching to the house into which
was born, and all who live long enough do so. But there is a
ayed right of primogeniture, for the senior son of a senior
inherits the bulk of the family stock when it passes to his
eration, and the eldest of each group of full brothers has a
cial claim to the cattle coming in from the marriages of his
ers.

Seniority, whether within the context of the lineage, or of the 554
rarchy of age-villages, is something respected in itself, but 556
lth carries authority and prestige only in so far as it is used
erously, in hospitality: one man is great and distinguished
iya) because he feeds people, another of little account because
is poor or mean.

Women occupy a position very subordinate to men in Nyak- 562
a society. They play no part in public life, except in so far as [593]
two great wives of a chief, and the first wife of a village head-
n co-operate with their husbands in rituals; and in the rela-
nship of husband and wife, as well as in that of father and
ghter, a woman is expected to show obedience and respect. [576]
r deference is expressed conventionally in her crouching to
et men (*vide* Plate IX), and in her use of the submissive *taa*
es, my lord') when addressed by them. Having no great chiefs
l little regard for rank, Nyakyusa men show no trace of sub-
vience in their manner to each other, but they expect a meek
npliance from all women. The only relationships with a male in
ich a woman may in some measure assert herself are those
ich she has with a brother, and with a brother's sons. Leader-

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ship among the women themselves is, moreover, less developed than in many other African societies.

The isolation and self-sufficiency of the Nyakyusa are diminishing rapidly, for considerable economic and political development followed the 1914–18 war. Coffee (first introduced by the German missionaries) has been developed as a native crop for export, and the cultivation of rice (which had been fostered by the British to provide food for their troops) has expanded. Gold-digging began some fifty miles beyond the borders of the Nyakyusa country, on the Lupa river, and there Nyakyusa men have found both employment as labourers and a ready market for much of their produce, so that by 1936 Rungwe district was exporting goods worth £24,000 annually.[1] In addition to this peasant production there are a small number of European estates producing coffee and tea for export.[2] We estimate the number of Nyakyusa working outside the district as migrant labourers at about 8,000 or 25 per cent of the able-bodied men. There were about 7,000 Nyakyusa men on the Lupa gold-fields in 1937,[3] and a small number on the coffee plantations of Mbozi. These are all within a hundred miles of home; and the Lupa labourers return usually after two or three months' work. A considerable number of Nyakyusa are also at work on the sisal plantations of the coast, and employed as domestic servants or in other semi-skilled jobs through Tanganyika, who remain away for periods up to two or three years. Nyakyusa labourers are regarded by European employers as intelligent and capable of heavy work, but lacking in all the subservient virtues.

The system of Indirect Rule was established in 1926, and a consistent attempt has been made to develop a centralized Native Authority for the Rungwe district. The traditionally sovereign chiefs of the Nyakyusa have been grouped in eleven court districts with one chief as president of the Native Court in each (see Map III); these eleven chiefs, together with the two presidents of the Ndali and Lambya courts, belong to a single federation, with an appeal court and joint Native treasury of its own. In the eleven Native Courts (which are courts of record) most of the

[1] Figure estimated on the basis of information supplied by the courtesy of the Agricultural Officer, Tukuyu.

[2] In 1938 the total area alienated was 26,074 ac.; only 2,200 ac. of this was being worked.

[3] Estimate of the Labour Officer on the 7/4 rpa, 4 June 1937.

[Missing in the original – Analyst]

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Theoretically the territorial arrangement is one in which the villages of the ruling generation lie at the centre of the country, each surrounded by satellite villages of their sons, while smaller villages of old men lie on the boundaries. In practice—at least nowadays—the pattern is more complex, with old men's villages squeezed in between those of the ruling generation. From the time of its establishment as a separate chiefdom at the 'coming out', the future division of the country is adumbrated: there is a senior headman in each half of the country with villages subordinate to him, and the mother of an heir in each half. On the boundary between the halves stand the ritual trees, landmarks for all to see.

Age and locality coincide, while kinship cuts across local grouping, fathers and sons, and very often brothers, being in different villages. But kinsmen tend to be established in the same side of a country, and so to remain within one chiefdom. Kinship terms are extended in some measure to the villages of the chiefdom, which are classified as those of 'our fathers', 'our elder brothers', 'our young brothers', and 'our sons'. Women have no direct share in the age-organization: their membership of a village turns on their relationship to some man—father, husband, husband's heir—and the age-range of women within one village is very wide.

Villages vary considerably in size. Boys' villages, as we have seen, begin with a dozen members or less, and the villages of old men are often very small also; we knew one with only 10 households, another with 11. The villages of young and middle-aged men commonly vary between 20 and 50 households, with 30 as a fair average in the hills. In Mwaipopo's country there were 540 taxpayers on the roll and we recorded 19 established villages and 6 boys' villages.[1] Some members of the boys' villages, and some elderly men, were not on the tax-roll, so that the average was over 20 boys or men in each village. Villages in the plain are somewhat larger, averaging around 40 households.

Men's villages are usually subdivided into sections under the leadership of assistant headmen, appointed by the headman of the village. These assistants do not share in the 'coming out' cere-

[1] *Vide infra*, pp. 181 ff. The tax registers are no guide to the number of villages since in them several villages are commonly lumped together as one under a senior village headman.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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ukwangala is only possible between contemporaries[1] they must build with contemporaries. The value set on *ukwangala* is thus related to the age-village; male contemporaries build together, and the company of, and good fellowship with, his age-mates is what creates a man of wisdom and character. Such is the Nyakyusa view of society.

For conversation to flow merrily and discussion to be profound there must be *ifyakwangalela*—'the wherewithal for good fellowship', that is, food and drink—and very great stress is laid on sharing these. Men and boys are expected to eat regularly with age-mates. Traditionally, fathers and sons never ate or drank together—to do so was held to be incompatible with the respect due from son to father—and men sought the company of equals at meals. From the time a small boy begins to herd he is encouraged to bring home two or three friends to eat with him, and in turn he visits each of them. Since boys have no fields of their own until they marry, but co-operate in cultivation with their parents, it is to their own mothers they go for food, and parents are proud of a son bringing many friends. 'Perhaps', said Angombwike, 'a son will come with his friends and cut a huge bunch of bananas, and take thick milk and eat with them. When the father comes back his wives will tell him: "Your son has eaten all the thick milk and cut a banana bunch!" Then he will ask: "How many men were with my son?" "Six!" "Ah, he's a chief!" the old man will say, smiling proudly.' 'And formerly if a young man came home often alone to eat, his father would beat him, or even take a spear and wound him, and when people asked why he would say: "This great fool comes *alone* to my place, again and again." It is good to eat with friends, for boys to go round in groups of four or five.'

After marriage each man is cooked for by his own wife, but he continues to eat with his friends, bringing them to his home or going to their's. The first wife to come to a young men's village is said to have a hard life. 'She has to draw water and cook for all the young men of the village—they come to drink, and to wash, and they beat her with a stick if she refuses them. No, the

[1] *Ukwangala* is sometimes used with reference to relatives as well as to village-mates, as in the phrase '*atikwangala hamwe nabakwe baba*', meaning 'he is not on good terms with his relatives'; but in its fullest sense it can only be used with reference to contemporaries.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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264 husband will not be angry; if he were, he would be mocked at:
562 "Did not your father provide marriage-cattle for this woman for you that she might be the wife (*unkasi*) of us all?" Sometimes, when
574 the woman is cooking, her husband's friends come and take food out of the pot before she has finished cooking. When she protests, saying it is not yet cooked, the men say: "It is your work to cook, ours to eat." Then when her husband comes she tells him that so and so, and so and so, have eaten the food and there is only water left in the pot. . . . But when her husband's friends begin to get married they say to their wives: "That woman is really our wife! Listen to her!" And she has honour among the other women, and when they go to fetch firewood she walks with nothing, another carries her axe and head-pad.' This account cannot be taken literally—the first wife in the village does not provide *all* the food for her husband's friends, who still eat at their mothers' homes, nor do they have any sexual rights over her though they call her 'wife', but she must serve them as far as she can.

571 Sometimes, we were told, men's eating groups last a lifetime,
264 but often friends quarrel or move, and the group breaks up. 'Per-
578 haps one eats at midday and does not summon his friend, but only calls him to the evening meal, then the other, who always calls his friend to the midday meal also, is angry, saying: "He grudges me food", and they separate. They just stop calling each other to eat. Or sometimes one tries to seduce his friend's wife, and on that account they separate.'

264 Eating with contemporaries is still considered right and proper
178 by Nyakyusa men, and it is generally practised by pagans, but the old men say that youths are less ready to share food than formerly. 'This custom of eating together is dying.' Certainly in Christian villages the practice has declined markedly. Many unmarried Christians eat with their friends, but the majority of the married men eat at home alone. Out of eight married men living in Rungwe, for example, only two ate together regularly, and the most educated group, the clerks, are notorious in the district for their eating habits. 'People are much shocked at the clerks for eating food alone. They say they are proud.'

264 Apart from eating regularly with certain close friends, well-to-
574 do pagan men are expected to entertain generously, inviting fellow villagers to drink beer, or to a 'dinner party'—an ample meal with delicious dishes, very carefully served—from time to

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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the Kikuyu)[1] that the equalitarian emphasis is related to the emphasis on age-organization. As we have seen, hereditary office exists among the Nyakyusa but the power of chief and hereditary priest is limited at every point by the power of the leaders of age-sets who are chosen each generation from among commoners. That democratic (i.e. non-hereditary) leadership is not a necessary concomitant of a developed age-organization is, however, proved by the fact that among the Zulu, Swazi, Pedi, and Tswana, whose military organization was based on age-regiments, rank is stressed, and the leaders of age-sets are always sons or kinsmen of the chief.

It is possible, however, that the low status of Nyakyusa women relative to men is partly dependent on the age-village organization. It is most obviously related to the high degree of polygyny, and the fact that the position of the various wives is not clearly determined by date of marriage, birth, or allocation of property. For a commoner the first wife betrothed is his great wife, who takes precedence in ritual, but there is no ranking of houses and allocation of the bulk of property to different houses as among the Nguni, nor the same strong pressure on a husband to visit each wife in rotation. Instead there is acute competition between a man's various wives for the position of favourite, with a disportionate share of milk and meat and of her husband's attention. We do not suggest that there is no competition among the wives of a Pondo or Zulu polygynist, but we argue that competitive tendencies have freer play among the Nyakyusa,[2] and that this competition depresses the status of women in relation to men.

Like the kinship organization, the age-village organization favours men. As we have seen, a main end of age-villages, in the Nyakyusa view, is to allow men the enjoyment of congenial company, that is the company of friends and equals. A village consists of a group of male contemporaries and their dependants; ideally, the men live together all their lives and form a close-knit group of equals, between whom mutual loyalty, hospitality, and affability is fostered from childhood. Those who move tend to go to villages in which they already have close friends. The women,

[1] J. Kenyatta, op. cit., pp. 186–9.

[2] Unfair division of milk between wives is said by some Nyakyusa to anger the ancestors who cause the cows to give blood in place of milk; nevertheless unequal allocation of milk is a much commoner cause of complaint than it is among the Pondo.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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on the other hand, come from many villages, and they move from village to village more than men, because most women are inherited at least once in their lives. Nor do the women form an age-set, for men inherit wives as old, or older than themselves, and they continue to marry young brides until they themselves are elderly. A village thus contains women of all ages, the older ones often being quite late-comers to it. There is neither the unity of a kinship group, with leadership of mother or grandmother, as among a matrilineal people like the Bemba, nor the leadership of the mother-in-law as among the patrilineal Nguni and Sotho peoples. It is true that among the latter peoples the leadership of women devolves on a man's senior wife when his mother is dead, but the pattern has developed in a society in which daughters-in-law usually live for a long time in the same homestead as their mother-in-law, whereas among the pagan Nyakyusa a woman rarely joins her own son until she is decrepit, long after his marriage. When the Nguni or Sotho chief wife is obeyed by her co-wives it is as the successor of her mother-in-law; indeed on the latter's death she is often referred to by junior wives as 'mother'. Where women have authority in a patrilineal society it is usually as mother, or grandmother, or father's sister. But there are none with such positions in the context of the age-village; the office of headman is not hereditary so there is no mother of the heir, and the headman's own mother and sisters normally live elsewhere.

Such solidarity and leadership as exist among women in pagan Nyakyusa society are within the group of women of the same lineage who live together. Great emphasis is laid on the propriety of a wife bringing a younger sister, or brother's daughter, as a junior wife for her husband (*ukusakula*): this is felt to be a compliment to the husband and a comfort to the wife, proof that the marriage has been a success. Co-wives who are of the same lineage are very closely identified, their children being treated almost as full siblings, and they themselves co-operating in everything.

One of the marked changes in contemporary Nyakyusa society is the development of leadership among women in the Christian congregations.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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women, daughters of the lineage precede wives. Seniority, of course, does not depend solely on age, and we once saw a little boy precede his father in the performance of a ritual for his grandmother, with whose generation he was identified. The relative status of husband and wife is expressed in the taboo on a woman [562] 'overstepping' her husband physically or metaphorically, and 'overstepping' is symbolized (oddly to a Christian) by the sign of a cross. The precedence of the chief wife is very marked. In commoner families she alone washes with her husband using the *ikipiki* medicine, and he performs the death ritual for her only. A chief may do this for two wives. In Selya a father washes in the puberty ritual with his senior daughter, and among the Kukwe a woman washes with her daughter or eldest son's first wife. 'To wash is to admit that I have lived, and borne a child, and grown up.'

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All the rituals celebrate a change in status, and danger lies in not recognizing or admitting the change, in clinging to the past. This is most obvious in the death ritual, which is directed to the separation of the living and the dead. The mourners have the corpse 'on their bodies', they may not separate themselves from him by washing till the appropriate moment, and they share their food and *ikipiki* medicine with the shade, thereby recognizing him as a kinsman; but in due course they drive him off: 'You were our kinsman before but now it is finished, you are a stranger.' 'You are no relative of ours.' 'We are not corpses.' And at the same time they bring him back transformed, as a beneficent spirit in the home. The pattern is a common one in Bantu Africa: the Nyakyusa peculiarity is (1) the speed with which the transformation is achieved (commonly the 'bringing back' of the spirit is delayed a year, whereas the Nyakyusa may delay only a month); and (2) the close correspondence between the change in status of the dead and the change in status of the older generation, who 'move aside' at the 'coming out'. Each generation has its day and must give place to the next.

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All through the rituals the dominance of the agnatic lineage is evident, but it does not exclude the recognition of kinship in the female line. Daughters' children *must* perform the ritual at death, twin birth, spearing, and binding with ropes, for their grandparents, while some sisters' children, and father's sisters' sons, may do so also. What is clear from the genealogies is that kinship links in the female line are not traced as far as in the male line and,

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

583 The dowry cattle are usually found by the father of the bridegroom; if he does not own them himself, the boy's uncles come to his aid; and in the event of divorce, they are re-distributed, with the increase, in the proportion in which each contributed. The father of the bride, who receives the cattle, as a rule divides them among his relatives, one going, in the case of the first daughter to be married, to the village headman.

593 It is usual to commiserate the sad lot of the African wife. I am not sure that much commiseration is
562 called for. If the husband converts his duties of natural guardian into those of oppressor, he will answer to her father and brothers. As I have indicated, she owns property in a small measure; she is mistress in her own house; even her husband seldom interferes with her decisions, and no one else ever does. She has to work hard, it is true, working up till old age at tasks that would quickly kill a European woman. But she is not unhappy; indeed one sees more happy faces among them than unhappy; and she is blessed beyond imagination in comparison with the horrible conditions in which some women in our own country lived during the earlier part of the Industrial Revolution; and large numbers of them are happy in their husbands and children. Although many girls are married before they know what is happening to them, and many are unhappily yoked, as revealed by the great numbers who run away later with young men of their own age; yet there are countless happy families, where deep affection binds

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

husband and wife by strong ties; and where a possibility of parting faces them, as in the case of men wishing to join the Christian Church, and so having to put away all wives except the first, it brings with it in very many cases a pain, keen and poignant, such as one might imagine would be felt by Europeans in similar circumstances. I know not a few cases where a young husband and wife began their married life by serious quarrelling; but after a while not only became reconciled, but discovered that something had happened to them not unlike falling in love with each other. And, while there are too many instances of the opposite, it is further true that at least in the presence of strangers, husband and wife treat each other with a mutual courtesy and dignity, which would form no inappropriate model for peoples of higher development.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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The balance between chiefs and commoners is explicit. So also is their dependence on *both* cultivation and herding, and it should be noted that, though the Nyakyusa speak of themselves as stock men, they are not pastoralists to the same extent as the Masai or the Nuer. The number of cattle in Rungwe District today is less than half the human population, and men traditionally have done the heaviest share of cultivation.

In every version of the myth the tension between father and son, or older and younger brother, is stressed. In Nyakyusa society the father (or his eldest son who replaces him) controls the family property and exacts obedience from his juniors who continue to show their respect after his death by sacrifices. The tale of Kyala and Lwembe celebrates the triumph of the junior. Thus, at the heart of the very ritual which sanctifies seniority there is the assertion of the victory of the son and younger brother. The myth expresses the aspirations of subordinates—of commoners and junior kinsmen—as well as the power of chiefs and seniors.

As we have already noted, the heroic cycle makes no reference to the peculiar Nyakyusa institution of age-villages. Their charter is a quite separate myth[1] which tells of a chief who looked on his daughter-in-law and loved her and took her, and this so shocked men that in future fathers and sons built separately, so that a father-in-law should never see his daughter-in-law.

There are other hints of the eternal theme. Besides the saga of Lwembe there is another quite different tale of the origin of fire, which is less often related. In it a girl who had angered her father by breaking his drinking calabash fled from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa valley, where she found people who ate their food raw. She made fire and cooked for them and 'all women came to her to learn to cook'. The long-necked calabash, used as a drinking vessel and in prayer to the shades, is a man's most personal possession destroyed at his death, and it stands for a husband, while cooking is a symbol of the sexual activity of women, so the myth is perhaps a drama of incest, but we have no direct evidence of this.

This last is the only tale in which a woman appears as a benefactor. In general, the mythology is that of a strongly patrilineal society in which men are dominant. The wives of Lwembe who walked behind their lord, shepherded by a lion,

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 85.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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are remembered, and the names of the two senior wives of a chief are often recited in genealogies because the heirs take their names from their mothers, but she-who-taught-cooking is the only heroine in her own right.

It is worth noting also that the rituals of kinship are linked neither with the heroic tradition nor with primeval incest. We could trace no myths regarding their beginning, save that concerning the origin of avoidance between father and daughter-in-law. The myth of the origin of death is a variation on the theme, so familiar in Bantu-speaking Africa, of the two messengers (a sheep and a dog in this version) sent to men by 'Kyala', one promising life, the other death. It provides no charter for the ritual.

And what of the relation between myth and history? The conquest of cultivators by cattle-keepers is the common theme of traditions in the lacustrine area, and it is quite possible that small groups of invaders, who brought with them iron tools and weapons and cattle, established themselves as chiefs over small unorganized groups of hunters and cultivators in an isolated valley three or four centuries ago.[1] The Nyakyusa valley and the plain of Ngonde have no iron ore, and the inhabitants were dependent, until the coming of the Europeans, on iron (*ikyela*) smelted in the hills to the east for weapons and tools.[2] The original inhabitants are said to have used wooden hoes exclusively—such hoes were still in common use in 1938[3]—so the myth of a Lwembe sending to BuKinga for iron hoes has a firm foundation in historical fact. But that the original inhabitants of the valley did not know the use of fire 300 or 400 years ago (when Lwembe arrived) is incredible. Here the record of one of the greatest events in history is fitted into the shallow time-scale of an isolated people. To them it is not *when* fire arrived that is really important, but *who* brought it; chiefs are chiefs to the Nyakyusa (as to other peoples in Africa) by virtue of this great benefit they brought to men.

[1] Namwanga tradition (recorded in the Mbeya District Book) tells of the introduction of iron fifteen generations ago. The Sangu tradition says that a tall, pale man from 'Somaliland' first brought iron spear-heads to BuSangu and his son established a hegemony by virtue of his superior weapons.

[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 7. The iron deposits on the Livingstone mountains have recently been investigated by the Colonial Development Corporation. A 'titaniferous iron mountain' in the south of Njombe District was found to be 'smeltable'. *Tanganyika: Annual Reports of the Provincial Commissioners*, 1951, p. 51.

[3] Wilson, *op. cit.*, plate VII.

13: Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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and other duties applicable to a girl after marriage. The practical instruction takes place in or before a special hut in the village under the leadership of the *abanyago (avanyago)*. The girl is admonished by the *unnyago* to obey her parents without any delay, to perform the commands of her mother immediately, e. g. to clean the hut, and especially to show obedience when guests are present. Should the mother blame her daughter unjustly, she should not reply. (The girl had been blamed in the earlier discussion that she had not swept the hut when her mother required her to do it). Then her duties and conduct towards her future husband were inculcated. As a wife she must never accept anything from the hands of her husband without kneeling and stretching out both hands, and turning away her face with eyes cast down. Also as a wife she must not hold her head up

Some of the drummers.

when she is addressed by a man. As a wife she must be anxious to prepare her husband's meal always at the right time, that means, it has to be ready when her husband returns from the field. If she sees her husband coming from the field, then she has to go to meet him, and take his hatchet from him. Should her husband scold her, she is not to reply; but she may ask her neighbours for help. It is one of her duties to take care of the regular cleaning of the hut[23]. The ashes must always be removed by her from the fireplace. If there are only a few ashes on the fireplace she must remove them with her hands[24].

[23] The place near the house where the sweepings are thrown down is called *urutagililo*.

[24] Cf. *Mackenzie*, p. 51, who refers to such moral instructions connected with puberty customs, probably at Karonga; cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 359 (Nygonde plain).